

2020 Newport RI City Council Candidates Questionnaire

TO: 2020 CANDIDATES FOR NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL
FROM: ALLIANCE FOR A LIVABLE NEWPORT
SUBJECT: ONLINE COUNCIL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE
DATE: July 29, 2020

As ALN has done for every local election since 2008, a City Council candidates' questionnaire has been created as a means of assisting Newport voters in making their election choices. The accompanying Word document contains questions for this year's City Council candidates selected from submissions ALN has received.

At Large candidates are asked to respond to six (6) questions and Ward candidates to the same six (6) plus a seventh (7) Ward-specific question. Candidates are urged to limit their response to each question to no more than five hundred (500) words (unless otherwise specified) and to enter those responses online via Google Forms. Candidates can either enter their responses directly on Google Forms or formulate responses first using the Word document and then transferring those to Google Forms.

Responses must be received no later than the end of the day on August 8, 2020. As soon as possible after that date, all responses will be uploaded at the same time to the ALN website (www.newportalliance.org) and made available for public viewing with accompanying notifications to the public through ALN's email subscriber list (approximately 600 subscribers) and through advertising and promotion on local radio, print, and online media.

This year ALN is delighted to be joined with our 2020 Election partners, Newport This Week, The League of Women Voters, The Newport Chamber of Commerce, WADK Radio, Newport Buzz, and Channel 18 Community Television. This collaborative will be conducting live "Zoom" public forums to which you have already been invited.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the Google Forms procedures, please send an email to info@newportalliance.org and you will receive a quick response by email or phone, depending on the nature of the question. Do you still need help with the form or process? Contact Chip Leakas ALN board advisor (401)339-0777 mobile generally 9am-9pm

ALN commends each of you for choosing to run and serve for the Newport City Council and looks forward to hearing from you as to the pressing issues and challenges Newport faces today.

2020 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE
Questions For All Council Candidates (At Large and Wards)

Email address *

First Name, Last Name *

Elected Council Office you are seeking: *

1.) Do you support the November ballot question for Newport to issue more than \$100million of bonds to be used to expand The Pell School and replace Rogers High School? If no, explain your reasons. If yes, what do you say to Newport residents and business owners concerned about the impact on their property taxes? If yes or no, what action(s) would you promote if the ballot question is defeated? *

As a former elected member of the Newport School Committee, my focus has always been in support of parents and students. While serving, much of the (very hard) work of the school committee was devoted to student housing. Ultimately bonds for a new middle school (2 tries) and then a new elementary school were passed. Plans were carefully prepared and construction was monitored in detail resulting in quality structures. We are now looking at housing at the high school level. Newport has proven that it can produce quality school facilities. My only concern is the 100M price tag which is high for a community of Newport's size even when considering the possibly of state reimbursement (not guaranteed and dependent on the future health of our state's economy). As required (and as it should be), it will be up to the voters to approve a bond for the construction of a new high school and expansion of our present elementary school. If passed I would be vigilant in ensuring that plans are again carefully prepared and construction is closely monitored. If the voters do not approve the bond then the next step is to analyze the reasons for defeat and determine if those reasons can be addressed. So regarding school construction, this is not the first time around for me.

2.) Traffic and parking problems in Newport persist and seem to be getting worse despite being the subject of countless studies and ad hoc committees. What specific measures (other than forming more committees and conducting more studies) would you promote to alleviate the problems? *

Newport's disadvantage is that Newport was set up in colonial times. As long there are "modern" cars there will be traffic issues in Newport. However, satellite parking will work if run efficiently, ferrying people to and from their vehicles on demand. Another (although somewhat futuristic) high tech possibility is to partner with technology companies that are at the forefront of vehicle technology (Google? Tesla?). When the technology is perfected, self driving cars and passenger shuttles will be able to utilize Newport's satellite lots upon user demand. However, Newport's advantage is also that it was set up in colonial times. Once dropped off at Newport's center, people are able proceed as pedestrians. It is not only desirable but imperative that Newport remain pedestrian (and bicycle) friendly. Use of current day parking and traffic controls do help but do not offer the long term solution we are all hoping for.

3.) Newport's economy is closely tied to tourism. The risk of that dependence has been made abundantly clear by the COVID pandemic. What, if any, alternatives do you see to the reliance on tourism? Based on your answer, what specific actions should be taken to further promote tourism and/or what specific actions should be taken to expand the economy beyond tourism? *

Yes, it is always best to have diversified economic activity. Newport should seek to provide infrastructure and support for a diversified economy, providing of course that the activity fits within the character and scale of the city of Newport. Today's Newport has reduced fishing, boat building, and other economies of the "past", pressured somewhat by hospitality. I would suggest partnering with private industry of both traditional and current activities to determine what economies are desirable and viable and how to offer local support. If done correctly, Newport could be a center of technology and technology support. However, I would not offer economic incentives as I strongly believe Newport is desirable on its own merits.

4.) The closure of the Visitors Center was announced recently. What do you propose should be done with the property? *

The Visitor's Center occupies a prime location and will surely attract much interest. However, before proceeding, I would strongly recommend community input as a first step to determine its best use. I would hope any plan would consider both short and long term affects.

5.) A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) template is being considered as part of the North End Urban Plan (NEUP). What would you like to see included in the CBA template? What measures will you promote and support to put the NEUP on a clear path to implementation?" *

A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) between a developer and the city may provide community based opportunities for residents. Considering some of the past uses of north end land, I would say it is important to first secure environmental testing and clean up and the establishment of an on-going environmental protection plan. Depending on the nature of the activity, there may be opportunities for job training and hiring. Benefits could also be secured in a partnership with our elementary school located in the north end. However, most important is the promotion of free and safe movement of residents in the north end - safe both for vehicle and on foot/bicycle traffic. Elimination of barriers created by heavy traffic patterns must be eliminated. In addition, any north end CBA should address Newport's in town parking congestion offering off hour satellite parking space.

6.) What do you most want Newport voters to know about you? (Limit response to a maximum of 250 words.)

Lifelong Newport resident. Attended Newport Public School K-12. 1976 Grad URI. Raised 3 sons all attending Newport Public schools K-12. Past elected member of the Newport School Committee serving a total of 10 years. Lifelong passion for the city of Newport. Currently retired and now hoping to direct time and energy as an elected member of Newport City Council. Open government, responsible budgets, fair tax burden, address affordability concerns for both young and old and most importantly, maintain Newport's scale and character and recognize that Newport is our home and must remain truly livable. Respectfully asking for your vote for this November, 2020 election.

7a.) Question For Third Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: Ocean Drive is the scene of traffic problems, speeding, illegal parking, and (primarily at Bretton State Park) loud noise and trash. Although these problems are at their worst during the summer months, they persist to some degree throughout the year. What specific measures would you promote to deal with these problems?

7b.) Question For Second Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: The intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and Memorial Boulevard is the scene of congestion and multiple accidents every summer. The traffic overflow from the north to Memorial is now affecting Red Cross and Gibbs as well. What measures should be adopted to handle this problem?

7c.) Question For First Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: The preferred plan for the Pell Bridge Offramp Realignment is now known. What measures should the City of Newport plan and enact to minimize disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods both during construction and, more importantly, after project completion?

During my daily commute I had witnessed unacceptable traffic back ups simply from deck work on the Pell Bridge. Morning incoming traffic was backed up into Jamestown almost to the Jamestown Bridge. In the afternoon there was the opposite affect with traffic backups length of the Pell bridge and into Newport and also into Middletown back to the 2 mile corner. It took literally hours not only to cross the bridge but also travel our local roads. There were improvements after changes were made in commuter lane openings and timing of the deck work. Going forward, It will be imperative to work with RITBA, RIDOT, local traffic control (both Newport and Middletown) and even contractors in advance of project construction to ensure minimum local disruptions. The federal Highway Administration's Environmental Assessment report concluded "no significant impacts". However, there will be some affect on wetlands, unmitigated excessive noise levels during construction and possible loss of up to three residential and 2 commercial properties which would have to be accommodated. The project is expected to free up approximately 20 to 30 acres (however, this assumes no existing contamination of soil or groundwater which has yet to be tested). Economic redevelopment is important but also to be considered are benefits in community use, municipal uses, local transportation and accessibility issues, and open space to maintain vistas. Whatever is ultimately decided for best land use, I strongly favor free movement for Newport residents eliminating barriers for all, including pedestrians.

